United Nations A/72/757–S/2018/150

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 34
Prevention of armed conflict

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government and in relation to the letter dated 30 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/72/725-S/2018/77), I am writing to express our regret and disappointment about the content and the tone of the above-referenced letter. It would not be our purpose to engage in polemics about the historical background of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, let alone about the history of Armenia and its people, as ample historical records and scholarly research worldwide are widely available and accessible in that regard. History is not written in government offices; propaganda is. As a matter of fact, the preference for propaganda is to relinquish intellectual or factual content. The above-referenced letter is, regrettably, a case in point, as are the latest territorial claims to Yerevan, the capital and other regions of Armenia, uttered by the President of Azerbaijan in his address to the ruling "Yeni Azerbaijan" party on 8 February 2018. The above-referenced letter, therefore, does not merit a substantive response.

However, it is the hate-induced and antagonistic tone of the letter that creates a renewed source of doubt about the genuine intention of the Government of Azerbaijan to seek a negotiated, peaceful compromise based on resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The letter represents a glaring manifestation of the concerns at the "repeated and unpunished use of inflammatory language by politicians speaking about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and at its adverse impact on the public's view of ethnic Armenians", expressed in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of Azerbaijan (see CERD/C/AZE/CO/7-9).

It is exactly such language that entices the likes of the notorious Ramil Safarov to commit murders and barbaric acts of mutilation and decapitation against Armenians, as was again the case during the military aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in April 2016, which was subsequently glorified by their government.

Please recycle

Since the purpose of the above-referenced letter was to extensively comment on the speech of the President of Armenia at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 24 January 2018, I attach to the present letter, for ease of reference, the full text of the speech (see annex).

Noteworthy is the following quote from the speech of the President of Armenia: "The time is ripe for the resolution of this conflict. It requires strict respect for the established ceasefire regime and honouring all the agreements reached in the past. Settlement must be peaceful and overcome the deficit of justice. No matter where I find myself, I will always be at the forefront for this matter as well. The parties shall assume joint responsibility for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and find a compromise solution, a middle ground settlement".

The international community, including the United Nations, has unequivocally rendered its support to the Co-Chairmanship by France, Russia and the United States of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as the sole internationally agreed negotiating format for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The compromise solution, proposed by the Co-Chairs, is firmly based on the three fundamental principles of non-use of force or threat of force, equal rights and self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity.

Once again, Armenia reiterates its firm commitment to the early and peaceful settlement of the conflict, based on the compromise proposals of the Co-Chairs. Armenia insists that commitment to peace requires strong and firmly articulated political will and equally resolute efforts to establish and sustain an environment conducive to peace. In his latest speech at the Munich Security Conference on 17 February 2018, the President of Armenia reaffirmed that "the Nagorno-Karabakh issue must be resolved as soon as possible, and by peaceful means".[1] Hate speech and hate propaganda, war mongering and obstruction of human contacts serve the opposite purpose, which is the risk of renewed hostilities with catastrophic consequences for the entire region.

In conclusion, I reiterate Armenia's deep appreciation of your continued support for the efforts of the Co-Chairs to seek a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

[1] www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2018/02/17/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-attended-Munich-security-conference.

Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Speech by President Serzh Sargsyan to the January session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France, 24 January 2018)

Honorable President of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Honorable Secretary General,
Distinguished Members of the Assembly,

At the outset, I would like to warmly greet and congratulate you, distinguished Mr. Nicoletti, on assuming the high office of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. You have indeed embarked upon this mission in rather challenging times. I strongly believe that your extensive experience and strong personal qualities are exactly what is needed for the future success and reputation of our organization. I also wish to commend Mrs. Kyriakides for her excellent performance in the capacity of President of this Assembly.

The last time I had the honor to speak from this high podium was in 2013, when Armenia held the Chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. That mission served as a key landmark in our integration within the larger family of the Council of Europe. I trust we met the expectations while carrying out that mission.

Tomorrow is January 25 — the day on which we acceded to the Council of Europe exactly 17 years ago. At the time of joining this Europe-wide structure, we were fully aware of the path that lay ahead of us. We were also fully aware that building and strengthening democracy would not be easy without the support and direct involvement of the Council of Europe structures. Indeed, through political will and joint constructive engagement, we managed to overcome numerous obstacles and to achieve profound reforms.

As I stand before this Assembly today, I can proudly state that we have honored the main commitments assumed towards the Council of Europe in terms of Armenia's democratization. This is not merely our assertion. Our achievements in consolidating the democratic institutions have been recognized by the monitoring reports of the Council of Europe's bodies. We firmly continue the efforts of joining the Europe-wide legal frameworks: the number of conventions Armenia has already signed up is close to 70. For us, this process is not simply about honoring the commitments that we undertook. In doing so, we are primarily implementing our own credo and our own convictions. We shall continue in that same vein. Moreover, our country's progress on the path of reforms will get a new momentum and accelerate in April, when the amendments to the constitution will enter into full force, and when we will embark upon the implementation of activities envisaged by our Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

Any democracy is a living organism. Throughout our quarter-century-long efforts in State-building we aimed at nourishing this very organism. We have been fully conscious that democracy constantly requires attention, review, and advancement; it cannot afford a standstill, and must keep up with the rapidly changing times in order to remain viable. Along the lines of this logic, we undertook constitutional reform in Armenia, which received wide-ranging support of the Council of Europe.

The process will be completed in April with a clear vision of strengthening the three pillars of the Council of Europe — the rule of law, protection of human rights, and democracy. We chose a transition to a parliamentary form of government as the most suitable path for strengthening democracy in our country. I announced the launch of the process back in 2013 when I spoke from this high podium before this Assembly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since our accession to the Council of Europe, we have heard both encouragement and criticism from our partners. I have no doubt that both have helped Armenia's progress.

Throughout this time, we have closely cooperated with the Venice Commission, based on the expert opinion of which we refined the constitutional reforms package. In an atmosphere of mutual trust, this efficient engagement continues up to date — through a process of implementing numerous new legislative solutions under the reformed Constitution. It was best manifested in the deliberations on Armenia's new Electoral Code, which resulted in the adoption of a transparent and inclusive process with participation of various political actors across the board. We opted for something unprecedented — stipulating by law the demand to published the signed lists of voters after the election. As you are aware, this practice is not common, especially in light of personal data protection concerns. However, we decided and we did it, in order to secure greater public trust in the elections.

The new Electoral Code clearly proved its viability in the 2017 April parliamentary election, which was observed by a large number of invited observation missions, including a delegation of this Assembly.

It is important to underline that the new Electoral Code also resulted in allocation of a certain number of seats in the National Assembly exclusively for the representatives of the national minorities. It was yet another step towards achieving governance that is more inclusive.

We are currently reforming our judicial, criminal, and criminal procedure codes, as well as the Referendum Act and the Constitutional Court Act. We are well aware that only effective, independent, and free from corruption risks judiciary can safeguard the rule of law.

In this context, we appreciate the important role of the European Court of Human Rights, the jurisprudence of which plays an essential role in enhancing the quality of justice in our country. We have implemented a number of legislative reforms and improved the legal practices on the basis of the ECHR jurisprudence. These are important steps for consolidation of the human rights protection in our country. These efforts have not gone unnoticed: the Republic of Armenia is a leader among the Council of Europe member States in terms of the proper and persistent implementation of the judgments of the European Court.

We are convinced that proper protection of human rights and consolidation of democratic values cannot be effective without a relentless fight against corruption. It must be prioritized at all social and political layers. Armenia has contemplated a qualitatively new toolkit in this respect: in mid-2017, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a number of Acts that create a first-ever national entity for the prevention of corruption in line with all international standards. The entity will get effectively functioning in 2018, and the Parliament will elect its members. The anti-corruption package also resulted in the adoption of the Act on whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers. We also criminalized illegal enrichement. We are determined and committed to continue our systematic and persistent efforts towards elimination of the evil of corruption day in and day out.

Distinguished Members of the Assembly,

Since accession to the Council of Europe, our country has born profound responsibility for honoring our obligations and respecting our collective commitment to the fundamental values of this organization.

However, in recent years, we have witnessed an unfortunate and unprecedented crisis of values in this organization: through their irresponsible conduct, to say the least, some MPs have acted contrary to the core mission of the Council of Europe and inflicted heavy damage upon the organization's reputation. The greater family of the Council of Europe thus faced perhaps the most serious challenge since its foundation, as cases of bribing Assembly members and resulting dishonest voting were exposed.

Since 2014, a number of politically biased and egregious reports and resolutions triggered a sharp change in the attitudes of Armenian society towards this Assembly. However, these revelations justify the hopes that such corrupt practices are short-lived. Eventually, they will rise to the surface, stamping out resolutions thus adopted, and discrediting the individuals and powers that back them. I am convinced that the report of the independent inquiry body looking into the exposed instances of corruption will eradicate those defective practices and help to strengthen the member States' trust in our organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Upon accession to the Council of Europe, Armenia also undertook a commitment to pursue efforts to settle the Nagorno Karabakh conflict by peaceful means only and to use its influence over Artsakh to foster the solution to the conflict. Although the Council of Europe is not a conflict resolution platform, I believe it is appropriate to briefly touch upon the issue in light of our aforementioned commitment.

Exactly 30 years ago, on the surface, everything could possibly seem calm and peaceful in Artsakh. However, the surface image was deceiving. We had never put up with Stalin's decision to annex Artsakh to Azerbaijan.

Throughout all those years, the people of Artsakh were extremely anxious because the Baku authorities did their best to drive Armenians out of their historic cradle. According to the 1926 census, Armenians accounted for over 90 percent of Artsakh's population; as a consequence of the Baku policies, the percentage had declined to just 77 percent of the population by 1988. I myself was among the Artsakhtsies that were worried about these developments.

In February 1988, the Artsakhtsies rose against the Baku policies and tried to exercise the Artsakh people's right to self-determination in a peaceful way. I was at the forefront of the uprising. The Parliament of Artsakh took the decision, and people went out for peaceful rallies. Azerbaijan's reaction was not simply a negative one. Azerbaijan's reaction was the massacre of Armenians living in the town of Sumgait hundreds of kilometers away from Artsakh. It was an act of revenge against Armenians for the decision adopted by Artsakh.

One side of the scale had a parliament's decision and a peaceful demonstration, and the other had violence and massacres. Everyone who needs to deal with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution must clearly comprehend this fact.

Hence, all attempts to put the parties of the conflict on the equal footing are inherently futile. Such an equation is nothing but false impartiality. It is an equality sign between the perpetrators of the Sumgait massacre and its victims. On February 27, we shall commemorate the victims of the Sumgait massacre.

The massacres went on to become the state policy, as Azerbaijan unleashed a war aimed at the complete annihilation of the Armenian population of Artsakh. Given the deficit of justice and the threat of extermination, Artsakh had no other choice but to resort to self-defense. Yet again, I was at the forefront, and I have never had the slightest regret about the choice I made then.

The time is ripe for the resolution of this conflict. It requires strict respect for the established ceasefire regime and honoring all the agreements reached in the past. Settlement must be peaceful and overcome the deficit of justice. No matter where I find myself, I will always be at the forefront for this matter as well. The parties shall assume joint responsibility for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and find a compromise solution, a middle ground settlement.

The negotiation process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs is the only internationally agreed format for the resolution of this conflict. The international community, including Council of Europe, has reiterated its support to this format on numerous occasions. The commitment undertaken by Armenia and Azerbaijan requires a joint and concerted effort of all the parties to the conflict.

However, Azerbaijan is obviously not ready for it. The aggression that Azerbaijan unleashed against Artsakh in April 2016 was characterized by egregious violations of the international humanitarian law against the peaceful civilians and prisoners of war. It struck a heavy blow upon the negotiation process by reawakening dreadful memories of the Sumgait massacres.

Unfortunately, this Assembly has at times allowed developments that turned a blind eye to the aforementioned facts, watering the mill of those who are not interested in peaceful settlement of the conflict. I call upon all the members of this Assembly to apprehend the potential negative consequences of a careless or biased language for the fragile stability in Artsakh.

Facing a permanent threat of war, Artsakh continues to build democracy and to promote respect for human rights. In all of these initiatives, Armenia will continue to provide full support to Artsakh. Armenia will tenaciously defend the rights and interests of Artsakh and help to strengthen Artsakh's security. As the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has rightly noted, there must be no grey zones in Europe when it comes to the protection of human rights. I hope that in the not-too-distant future, this organization, too, will stand by the side of Artsakh with all of its expertise. A person living in Artsakh deserves it; the people of Artsakh have long earned this right.

The protection of human rights is a priority for the Artsakh government: as to the fundamental documents of the Council of Europe, Artsakh unilaterally subscribed to the European Convention of Human Rights back in 2015 and undertook to implement it fully. Commendably, Nagorno Karabakh has achieved all of this on its own, without tangible support from any international organization. It proves once again that in Artsakh respect for and protection of human rights are not mere words, but a conscious and determined choice.

Artsakh cannot stay out of the international processes simply because Azerbaijan is opposed to it. The authorities of Azerbaijan commit flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms — not least the criminal prosecution of opposition figures and even their abduction from the territory of another country.

This brings me back to the work of the European Court of Human Rights: the ECHR has examined applications by Azerbaijani citizens that are also related to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I understand that the ECHR takes up these issues with the purpose of precluding "grey areas" and safeguarding human rights throughout Europe. Nevertheless, political language and assessments in the

decisions of the ECHR can have direct negative impact on the negotiation process. Therefore, it is necessary for the ECHR to exercise extreme caution in its assessments and avoid any political language.

Distinguished Members of the Assembly,

Our national economies are more vulnerable than ever in the face of present-day global challenges. As a result, welfare and prosperity are at the center of public attention. The challenging realities in our region in their turn undermine the economic growth potential. Therefore, we aspire to make the best use of all available resources, including the opportunities availed to us by integration structures.

Five years ago, in 2013, shortly after Armenia's decision to accede to the Eurasian Economic Union, many people, including a number of them in this Assembly, expressed skepticism towards Armenia. However, Armenia proved her ability to combine engagement in different integration structures and even to serve as a role model of cooperation. On this day two months ago, on November 24, on the margins of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, Armenia and the European Union concluded a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which contemplates a completely new quality of engagement. Armenia's fully-fledged integration in the Eurasian Economic Union was not an obstacle for that matter in any way or shape.

Today, we actively continue to extend our international engagement in various other directions. The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie is a case in point; that is for us a unique platform of engagement in terms of both language and culture, as well as for promotion of human rights. Armenia will have the honor to host the 17th Summit of la Francophonie in October 2018 in Yerevan.

The motto of the summit will be "Vivre ensemble/Living Together," and a pact with the same name will be adopted for strengthening human rights and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. For us, it is not simply a motto: the Armenian nation knows the price of hate speech, intolerance, and discrimination, and we fight against such practices on all possible platforms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Council of Europe. It is a crucial landmark for our greater family, which has been fighting for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe for almost seven decades now. An organization created by only 10 States, it now unites 47 States of the European Family with a population of 820 million. I consider this to be an enormous achievement that should be cherished; no effort should be spared in building a positive agenda and further enhancing the role and significance of this organization.

The mission of the Council of Europe, however, extends beyond this. The organization has a great role to play in political as well as civilizational terms. I believe that the organization needs a further stimulus in redefining its role and significance in Europe-wide political architecture. Contemporary mechanisms and arrangements are truly wanted by our societies in order to increase this Organization's effectiveness. For quite some time now, we are closely following the commendable process of reforms initiated in the Council of Europe by the Secretary General.

Armenia supports the idea of convening a 4th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. I believe it will be a good opportunity for identifying the most pressing problems of our continent and revisiting the vision of a stronger and more inclusive Europe. I am confident that the founders of the Council of Europe should have been very proud about the fact of uniting 47 countries of

Europe under one roof. This is an achievement the importance of which should not be underestimated; this unity needs continuous support from all of us.

Armenia stands ready for the persistent journey towards a more mature form of engagement and cooperation. Armenia stands ready to contribute by all means at its disposal to the success of the Council of Europe — our shared home of democracy and the rule of law.

Thank you.

United Nations A/72/758–S/2018/137

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
21 February 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 34 (b)
Prevention of armed conflict: strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 19 February 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the filing of its memorial in arbitration proceedings against the Russian Federation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34 (b), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yuriy **Vitrenko**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

18-02726 (E) 230218

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 19 February 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding the filing of its memorial in arbitration proceedings against the Russian Federation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

On 19 February 2018, Ukraine filed its Memorial in arbitration proceedings against the Russian Federation under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("UNCLOS"). The Memorial establishes that Russia has violated Ukraine's sovereign rights in the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and Kerch Strait.

Since 2014, Russia has unlawfully excluded Ukraine from exercising its maritime rights; it has exploited Ukraine's sovereign resources for its own ends; and it has usurped Ukraine's right to regulate within its own maritime areas. Through these violations of international law, Russia is stealing Ukraine's energy and fisheries resources, harming the livelihoods of Ukrainian fishermen, and blocking traffic to Ukrainian ports with its illegal bridge over the Kerch Strait, among other serious violations.

Ukraine asks the Tribunal to end the Russian Federation's violations of UNCLOS and vindicate Ukraine's rights in the Black Sea, Sea of Azov, and Kerch Strait, including by ordering Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereign rights in its own waters, to cease its theft of Ukraine's resources, and to pay reparation for hydrocarbon resources Russia has wrongfully taken, among other relief.

Ukraine initiated arbitration proceedings against the Russian Federation in September 2016. A five-member Tribunal sitting in The Hague has been constituted to hear Ukraine's case. Ukraine is vindicating its rights in the face of Russia's flagrant violations of international law in appropriate international forums, including the UNCLOS case, as well as Ukraine's case against the Russian Federation before the International Court of Justice.

United Nations A/72/759–S/2018/149

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 44
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 16 February 2018, addressed to you by the Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Mehmet Dânâ (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative

18-02837 (E) 270218

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing in response to the letter dated 6 February 2018 addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative in New York and circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council (A/72/737-S/2018/96), which, yet again, contains false assertions similar to those made in his previous letters. In order to set the record straight, I should like to bring the following to your kind attention.

At the outset, regarding the claims of so-called "infringements of international air traffic regulations" and "violations of the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkey", I wish, once again, to reiterate that flights within the sovereign airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus take place with the full knowledge and consent of the relevant authorities of the State, over which the Greek Cypriot administration in South Cyprus has no jurisdiction or right of say whatsoever. The civil aviation authority of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is the sole competent authority to provide air traffic and aeronautical information services within its own national airspace. As to the false assertion that notices to airmen are "illegally issued", it must be underlined that activities within the Ercan advisory airspace that require notices to airmen are carried out by the relevant authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in accordance with article 3 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).

Similarly, the claim in the letter regarding the Turkish Cypriot ports is also baseless, given the fact that the Greek Cypriot administration has no jurisdiction or right of say over Northern Cyprus. Furthermore, that claim ignores the present realities on the ground, namely, the existence of two independent self-governing States on the island of Cyprus, each exercising sovereignty and jurisdiction within its respective territory.

As to the repeated false allegations regarding Ercan Airport in the North, it should once again be underlined that the technologically up-to-date Ercan area control centre and airport in North Cyprus have been providing regular, reliable and safe air traffic services since the Greek Cypriot refusal in 1977 to provide air traffic services in the northern part of the island, in line with its isolation policy that has been imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people. Ever since, all flights within the sovereign airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have taken place with the full knowledge and permission of the Civil Aviation Department of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, over which the Greek Cypriot administration in South Cyprus has no jurisdiction or control. Furthermore, I should like to stress that the allegation regarding the interference of radio frequencies is also totally baseless.

Moreover, the isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriots, which the Greek Cypriot side attempts to perpetuate by encouraging the international community to deem all air and sea ports in Northern Cyprus "illegal", is in complete contravention of international law, as well as the call made by the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his report to the Security Council dated 28 May 2004 (S/2004/437), in which he clearly stated: "I would hope they [members of the Security Council] can give a strong lead to all States to cooperate both bilaterally and in international bodies to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and barriers that have the effect of isolating the Turkish Cypriots and impeding their development, deeming such a move as consistent with Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984)."

The legislation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on aeronautical safety meets all standards and recommendations of the International Civil Aviation

Organization, providing safe and swift navigation of aircraft landing at or taking off from Ercan Airport and using airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. All airports in Northern Cyprus are in full conformity with international standards, and necessary investments have been made to keep up with the developing technology. The number of air traffic controllers has been increased in accordance with the increasing number of flights over the years, and the Ercan area control centre is in regular and close cooperation with the Ankara area control centre in order to ensure the safe conduct of all flights in the region. In 2017 alone, the number of passengers who used Ercan Airport stood at 3,962,541, and this number is expected to reach 4,200,294 in 2018. Moreover, in 2017, 27,197 aeroplanes used Ercan Airport for arrival and departure and 189,787 aeroplanes used the Ercan advisory airspace, and these numbers are expected to reach 27,469 and 193,583, respectively, in 2018. In that regard, it must also be stressed that the Turkish Cypriot side is committed to upholding the highest standards in the field of air navigation safety, in full conformity with the Chicago Convention of 1944, and that it is ready to cooperate with the Greek Cypriot authorities on this very important issue.

Availing myself of the present opportunity, I should like to call upon the Greek Cypriot side to discontinue such counterproductive and outdated rhetoric. Moreover, the Greek Cypriot administration should once again be reminded that its counterpart is, and has always been, the Turkish Cypriot side, not Turkey.

(*Signed*) Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

United Nations A/72/760

General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 February 2018

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Agenda item 104
Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Letter dated 13 February 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Cyprus, Egypt and Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to inform you that the fifth trilateral meeting between the President of the Republic of Cyprus, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic was held in Nicosia on 21 November 2017.

Following the meeting, a joint declaration was adopted reaffirming the consensus among the three countries on current international and regional issues and outlining the parameters and principles for their trilateral cooperation aimed at promoting the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, good neighbourly relations, peace and stability (see annex).*

It would be greatly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 104.

(*Signed*) Kornelios **Korneliou**
Permanent Representative
Republic of Cyprus

(*Signed*) Mohamed Omar Mohamed **Gad**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.
Arab Republic of Egypt

(*Signed*) Maria **Theofili**
Permanent Representative
Hellenic Republic

* The annex is being circulated in the language of submission only.

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 13 February 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Cyprus, Egypt and Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Joint Declaration following the 5th Cyprus-Egypt-Greece Trilateral Summit Nicosia, 21 November 2017

The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr Nicos Anastasiades, the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, and the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Mr Alexis Tsipras, met in Nicosia on 21 November 2017. They took stock of the achievements from previous trilateral Summits, which reinforced the vitality and the robust nature of the trilateral mechanism. They expressed their firm commitment to further broaden and deepen their trilateral partnership in various fields of common interest and to enhance their efforts towards promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean based on their common values and interests.

The Heads of State and Government concurred that the guiding principles of the tripartite partnership are the respect of international law and of the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including commitment to good neighbourly relations, international peace and security, respect for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States.

Given the geopolitics of the region and the historic relations between the three countries, the Summit reaffirmed the importance of closer cooperation and policy coordination in many fields. At this Summit, it was agreed to enhance trilateral cooperation in the fields of Energy, Migration, Tourism, Environment, Protection of Cultural Heritage, Information and Communication Technology, Agriculture and the Diaspora. The Heads of State and Government welcomed the progress achieved so far in these sectors and encouraged further cooperation, including through the implementation of specific projects that are to the benefit of their respective peoples.

They welcomed the planting of a symbolic olive grove in Egypt involving 4500 olive seedlings originating from Cyprus, Egypt and Greece in equal numbers. They acknowledged that the olive tree, as a symbol of peace and prosperity, best symbolizes the underlying principles of this tripartite cooperation that aims at promoting peace and stability in the region, and enhancing people's prosperity through joint actions and solidarity.

This current trilateral partnership serves as an exemplar for furthering dialogue and promoting the relations between the European Union (EU) countries and the countries of the region. In this respect, the Heads of State and Government reiterated the vital importance of strong and solid EU-Egypt relations, which will contribute to the peace and stability in both the Middle East and Europe.

The Heads of State and Government reviewed the relationship between the EU and Egypt, highlighting the mutual benefit deriving from various areas of cooperation between the two sides. In this regard, they welcomed the 7th EU-Egypt Association Council, held on 25 July 2017, and the adoption of the jointly negotiated EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities that pave the way for a reinforced, mutually beneficial partnership leading towards a stronger strategic engagement in areas of common interest. They agreed that a strategic partnership between the EU and Egypt is an essential framework for addressing pressing common challenges such as terrorism and extremist ideologies, irregular migration, sustainable development, and achieving economic prosperity.

The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their commitment to working closely together towards further developing various aspects of the EU-Egypt partnership, on the basis of principles of mutual respect, joint ownership, common interests and reciprocal commitments. The Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of the Union for the Mediterranean for the countries of the region.

The Heads of State and Government also reaffirmed their willingness to continue their excellent cooperation in the context of International Organizations and especially within the UN system, by also supporting each other's candidatures in these fora.

They underlined the importance of preserving and protecting the cultural heritage of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, in general, and emphasized their resolve to counter looting and illicit trafficking in cultural property including cultural property originating in armed conflict areas. In the same vein, the Heads of State and Governments called for further steps to prevent and prohibit the illicit trade in cultural properties and promote cooperation in restoring illicitly trafficked cultural properties. They welcomed the "Convention on Offences Related to Cultural Property", the "Nicosia Convention", which was opened for signature on 19 May 2017 in Nicosia, in the context of the Cyprus Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the only international treaty specifically dealing with the criminalization of the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

They are also determined to join efforts for the protection of underwater cultural heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean from illicit excavations and damage that might be caused by other activities and to develop a framework of close consultation and cooperation on this issue.

They welcomed the 2nd Athens Conference on Religions and Cultural Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence in the Middle East, held on 29–31 October 2017, and its value as a forum for enhancing tolerance, harmony, coexistence among persons belonging to different religions and cultures in the region and protect their cultural heritages.

They also welcomed the Ancient Civilizations Forum (ACForum), held in Athens on 24 April 2017, focusing on culture as one of the main drivers of soft power in international relations.

The Heads of State and Government expressed their satisfaction with the convening of the 2nd Rhodes Informal Ministerial Conference for Security and Stability, which was held on the 22 and 23 May 2017, under the theme: "Living and Working Together in Peace and Stability". In this respect, they reiterated their determination to promote, amid diverse security challenges for the Eastern Mediterranean, a positive agenda of cooperation for the benefit of this strategically, economically and culturally important neighbourhood, making it a safer place for its people to prosper.

The Heads of State and Government acknowledged that the youth represent the hope for the future of their countries and wider region. In this respect, they welcomed the successful World Youth Forum held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, from 4–9 November 2017. They also welcomed the initiative of the 2nd Euro-Arab Summit "Towards a Solid Alliance", held in Athens on 9–10 November 2017.

The Heads of State and Government reviewed the progress of projects already underway within the trilateral mechanism and discussed additional areas of cooperation.

They recalled their common interest in establishing and developing trilateral cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technology and its applications and welcomed the signing by their respective Ministers of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the field of Information and Communication Technology, which took place on 5 July 2017, in Cairo.

The Heads of State and Government were particularly pleased to inaugurate today the Cyprus Egypt Greece Collaborative Innovation Network (CEG COIN) headquartered in Egypt and branches in Cyprus and Greece, respectively. The CEG COIN will serve as a platform to enhance collaboration, networking and business matchmaking of the innovation ecosystems of the three countries.

They also welcomed the Trilateral Declaration signed at Ministerial level on environment-related issues in Cairo, on 29 May 2017. Recognising the importance of international commitments, the possible impact of transboundary projects and the challenges facing the Mediterranean region, they expressed the intention to pursue joint actions in the following five priority areas: Preparedness and response to major marine pollution incidents in the Mediterranean; Combating coastal erosion and coastal zone management; Biological diversity and nature protection; Waste management; and Climate change adaptation.

The common challenges faced in the energy field, the need for diversification of energy resources and routes, the security of energy supply and the need to modernize and develop new energy infrastructures, enrich the prospects for further promoting trilateral energy cooperation. In this context, aspects of cooperation especially in the areas of hydrocarbons, electricity and renewable energy sources were discussed. To this end, they also encouraged and welcomed initiatives from the private sector of mutually beneficial energy infrastructure projects, which contribute to the energy security of all three countries such as the EuroAfrica Interconnector.

They welcomed the signing by the Ministers responsible for Tourism of a Protocol aimed at promoting the development and strengthening of cooperation in the field of cruise tourism in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, with a view to increasing the tourist flows to the three countries.

The three countries share historic ties, which bind one to the other through, inter alia, their diaspora. The Heads of State and Government welcomed the trilateral meeting between the Commissioner and Ministers of the three countries responsible for Diaspora Affairs held on 2–3 October 2017 in Cairo. The Heads of State and Government agreed to further develop cooperation through the identification of specific initiatives involving the diaspora.

They welcomed the recent trilateral meeting of their Foreign Ministers held on 22 September 2017, in the margins of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly in New York. They reiterated the importance and efficacy of this trilateral consultations mechanism concerning foreign policy issues, which reaffirms the mutual commitment of the three States to cooperate and work towards promoting security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and wider region.

The Heads of State and Government agreed to intensify efforts to tackle regional challenges, to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, increase information sharing and promote regional security, long-term stability and prosperity. They strongly call on transit countries to share information regarding foreign terrorists Fighters (FTFs) with concerned states and international organizations in particular Interpol. They expressed solidarity to the people and the Government of Egypt, who are suffering from acts of terrorism which seek to destabilize the country, and who

are at the forefront of the efforts to fight terrorism both inside the country and in the region.

The Heads of State and Government agreed that, on the basis of the principles of solidarity and equitable burden-sharing, the effective management of large movements of refugees and migrants is the responsibility not only of neighbouring States and of Europe, but also of the international community as a whole. To this end, initiatives should be undertaken to address the root causes of this complex phenomenon through cooperation between countries of destination, origin and transit including in relation to developmental aspects. The Heads of State and Government also expressed appreciation for Egypt's efforts to address migration challenges, by accommodating refugees and migrants and working to prevent illegal migration flows as well as smuggling and trafficking of human beings.

The Heads of State and Government stressed the importance of the respect of the sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction each State has over its maritime zones in accordance with international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and expressed their desire to strengthen their cooperation through a series of agreements on the exploitation and transfer of natural gas, where the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves would serve as a catalyst for regional stability and prosperity. They underlined that this cooperation is based on the well-established rules of international law. In this respect, they emphasized the universal character of the UNCLOS and stressed their commitment to proceed expeditiously with the negotiations on the delimitation of their common maritime boundaries as appropriate.

They called on Turkey to cease all illegal activities within the maritime zones of Cyprus and refrain from similar actions in the future.

The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their unwavering support to the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem that will reunify Cyprus in a viable, functional state in line with UN Security Council resolutions and international law. They stressed that a comprehensive settlement must safeguard Cyprus' independence and sovereignty, without outdated security arrangements which allow for the right of foreign military intervention and without foreign troops. They underlined that the United Nations remains the forum, through which a settlement can be achieved under the Good Offices mission of the UN Secretary-General.

On the Palestinian issue, they called for a just, negotiated and lasting peace settlement entailing a two-state solution based on the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, through the establishment of a sovereign, viable and contiguous Palestinian state based on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace with all its neighbours. They also stressed that the two-state solution is the only solution that responds satisfactorily to Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations.

They recognised the instrumental role played by Egypt in the conclusion of the agreement between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo, on 22 October 2017, aiming at intra-Palestinian reconciliation. They welcomed the full return of the Gaza crossings to the control of the Palestinian Authority as a significant development in the implementation of the agreement reached in Cairo. They underlined the importance that the agreement delivers on the ground.

On Syria, the Heads of State and Government expressed their commitment to the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Syrian state. They expressed their firm belief that only a credible political solution, as defined in

UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communique, will ensure the stability of Syria and enable a defeat of Da'esh and other UN-designated terrorist groups in Syria. They reaffirmed their support to the UN Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, and to his efforts to convene the 8th round of the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva, on 28 November.

On Libya, the Heads of State and Government welcomed the appointment of Ghassan Salamé as new Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the "Action Plan for Libya" presented during a high-level meeting on 20 September 2017. They expressed their deep concern for the continued threat posed by terrorism in Libya, as well as smuggling and trafficking through Libya and encouraged all Libyan parties to work constructively with SR Salamé.

On Iraq, they expressed support to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. All parties within Iraq, as well as all regional actors, should exercise restraint and avoid unilateral steps and actions. All outstanding issues should be resolved by Iraqis through peaceful and constructive dialogue within the provisions of the Iraqi constitution. They also expressed their deep sorrow over the tragic aftermath of the earthquake that struck the wider region on the evening of 12 November, while they addressed sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

On Yemen, they expressed their concern with the escalation of violence and the deteriorating humanitarian crisis, including the massive outbreak of cholera. They expressed support for a peaceful and negotiated political solution, in accordance with the relevant UNSCR that would bring an end to the conflict which has devastating consequences for the country and its population and seriously undermines regional stability.

The Heads of State and Government encouraged by the positive results thus far and convinced by the strategic importance of the trilateral cooperation will continue to work closely on issues of mutual interests to the benefit of their peoples and of the peoples of the wider region.

United Nations A/72/761–S/2018/86

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
2 March 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 65
Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 2 March 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), the progress study on youth and peace and security.

On 12 August 2016, my predecessor appointed Graeme Simpson (South Africa) as the independent lead author to develop the study and recommendations for action. He also appointed an Advisory Group of Experts to provide guidance and support in the preparation of the study. The Advisory Group of Experts was composed of the following independent experts: Farea Al-Muslimi (Yemen), Scott Attran (United States of America), Chernor Bah (Sierra Leone), Ikram Ben Said (Tunisia), Malual Bol Kiir (South Sudan), Kessy Martine Ekomo-Soignet (Central African Republic), Ilwad Elman (Somalia), Matilda Flemming (Finland), Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts (Jamaica), Luz Alcira Granada Contreras (Colombia), Saba Ismail (Pakistan), Thevuni Kavindi Kotigala (Sri Lanka), Nur Laiq (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), Mieke Lopes Cardozo (Netherlands), Robert Muggah (Canada), Hussein Nabil Murtaja (State of Palestine), Funmi Olonisakin (Nigeria), Salim Salamah (Syrian Arab Republic), Ali Saleem (Pakistan), Hajer Sharief (Libya) and Marc Sommers (United States). I am grateful for the work of Mr. Simpson and the experts and their contribution to our understanding of young people's role in relation to peace and security.

I encourage Member States to consider this study and its recommendations carefully. I stand ready to report, if requested, on how the United Nations is following up on the implementation of the recommendations emanating from the study.

I should be grateful if the progress study, which has been transmitted to me in the enclosed letter dated 23 February 2018 from the independent lead author, could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 65, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-02860 (E) 150318

Please recycle

Letter dated 23 February 2018 from the independent lead author of the progress study on youth and peace and security mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015) addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour of submitting the progress study on youth and peace and security mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015).

It has been my immense privilege to work with the talented and visionary Advisory Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General. I am deeply indebted to their contributions on policy, practice and scholarship.

I am also grateful for the strategic guidance and advice from the Steering Committee for the study composed of 33 organizations. Members of the Steering Committee and other partners generously supported the research process through the provision of background papers and the organization of consultations and focus group discussions with young people throughout the world.

Over the course of 18 months, while conducting research and drafting the study, I had the chance to engage with thousands of young people in all regions of the world. Our methodology was deliberately organized to provide access and voice to many young people who would not ordinarily have had the chance to participate in this sort of policy process. Through consultations, country studies, focus group discussions and online contributions, they shared their hopes and aspirations for a peaceful world and described their incredible initiatives, commitments and dedication to peace and security. They took a leap of faith in trusting that their uncensored perspectives would be visible through the study. I gladly carry the burden of this responsibility and only hope in transmitting this to you, that I can come close to doing justice to their voices.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by an extraordinary secretariat jointly put in place by the Peacebuilding Support Office and the United Nations Population Fund.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to you and your office for the trust you placed in me and the privilege it has been to undertake this task.

(*Signed*) Graeme **Simpson**
Lead author

The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security

I. Introduction

1. There are extraordinary young people creatively seeking ways to prevent violence and consolidate peace across the globe, in devastated and conflict-affected societies as well as in those enjoying relative peace. The present progress study, prepared in response to Security Council resolution 2250 (2015), offered a unique opportunity to listen to them and learn about the multiple ways they work for peace and security. Their work promises the potential of a tremendous peace and security dividend for Governments and international actors. However, many young people are frustrated by the tendency of their Governments and international actors to treat youth as a problem to be solved, instead of as partners for peace. Young people throughout the world expressed their loss of faith and trust in their Governments, the international community and systems of governance that they feel excluded from, contributing to a strong and ongoing sense of injustice. This must be addressed in order to benefit from and support young people's contributions to peace and to realize the potential of 1.8 billion young people globally. In the progress study, Governments and international actors are called upon to undergo a seismic shift and recognize young people as "the missing peace".

2. The preparation of the present study involved a participatory process with young people at its heart. A diverse group of young people was engaged in the research, with efforts made to involve those frequently excluded from global policy processes, such as refugee youth, former gang members and youth living in hard-to-reach locations. Face-to-face consultations were held with a total of 4,230 young people, including 281 focus group discussions in 44 countries, as well as 7 regional and 5 national consultations. Research also included 27 country-focused studies, 19 thematic submissions from partners, 5 online thematic consultations, a global survey of youth-led civil society peacebuilding organizations and mapping exercises of interventions by Member States and United Nations entities focused on young people in relation to peace and security. A full, in-depth version of the study will be published in the course of 2018.

3. The study is divided into five parts. Section II reflects on stereotypical conceptions of youth and debunks a series of policy myths that have misguided policy and programmatic approaches related to youth, violence and conflict. Section III illustrates the breadth and diversity of young people's contributions to peace, from local to transnational networks. Section IV explores the social contract between young people and their Governments, as well between youth and their communities, offering insights on political participation, economic inclusion and educational opportunities. Section V provides a framework for partnering with and investing in young people to prevent violence, to promote their inclusion and to translate the demographic dividend into a peace dividend — the core strategy for the implementation of the youth and peace and security agenda.

II. Tackling stereotypes and policy myths

"We've been categorized, we've been made into an outsider group." (Côte d'Ivoire)[1]

A time of passage

4. Youth, unlike other forms of identity, such as gender, ethnicity, caste or race, is a transitional phase of life. Across the globe, young people and analysts alike describe how the transition from youth to adulthood is associated with diverse milestones that signal the acquisition of relative autonomy and adult status, based on evolving capacities and social standing. These milestones vary considerably depending on culture, gender and context and may be associated with diverse events or rites of passage that facilitate young people's transition into adulthood. Social dislocation produced by violent conflict and criminality is one of many factors that may disrupt this transition, leaving youth in a limbo that has become known as "waithood". This is fundamentally gendered, as young women and men struggle to transition into adulthood in different ways. Although some young women may acquire the status of adulthood more quickly, as a result of childbearing or marriage, many experience the same struggles to transition as young men. Factors inhibiting young men's ability to marry, including financial constraints, may add to their problems in attaining adult status. For both young men and women, difficulty in acquiring land, jobs, education and a home mean many find themselves trapped in youthhood, affecting their status in society and potentially contributing to a sense of frustration.

5. There is no consensus on a universal chronological definition of youth. The Security Council, in its resolution 2250 (2015), defines youth as 18 to 29 years of age; however, age parameters vary significantly across Governments, regional organizations and United Nations entities. In the present study, the age definition in the resolution is respected, but a flexible approach, reflecting the diversity of sociocultural practice, is adopted. The approach encourages early intervention with children and young adolescents for the purposes of protection from and prevention of violence. In the present study, the terms "youth" and "young people" are used interchangeably.

6. For peace and security policy and programming to be effective, it is essential to understand how the experiences of young people vary over time in response to changing social, political and cultural landscapes. As a microcosm of wider society, young people are diverse, sometimes divided and anything but homogenous. Beyond just differences in age, young people, as a group, are characterized by diversity based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, caste, class, culture, context and competing political affiliations. Recognition of these differences is necessary to tackle sometimes wishful assumptions about youth unity.

The youth and peace and security policy context

7. For the young people consulted during the preparation of the present study, youth and peace and security cannot be disconnected from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They asserted the symbiotic relationship between peace and security, development and human rights, and specifically addressed the interdependence among peace, justice and inclusive institutions. From a human rights perspective, youth occupy a grey area between the rights and protections afforded to children and the rights and political entitlements that they should — but often do not — enjoy as young adults. This rights realization gap must be addressed, fully

[1] All quotations in the present progress study come from young people involved in the research undertaken for the study. For a full list of consultations, focus group discussions, country case studies and thematic papers, see www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy.

establishing youth as rights bearers. Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) builds upon Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, especially its emphasis on civil society actors, opening avenues of participation for traditionally excluded stakeholders and the pivotal role of young women for peace. In their work, young people address different phases of peace and conflict — from preventing the outbreak of violence to post-conflict peacebuilding — demonstrating their commitment to peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Debunking assumptions

"Even if you make the effort to change, society gives you an eternal tattoo, a label of an offender, a failure or a source of problems." (Tunisia, male)

"You are seen as something negative by the media, by society, and then it is easy to start seeing yourself that way... Maybe they are talking about me?" (Sweden, male)

8. In 2016, an estimated 408 million youth (aged 15–29) resided in settings affected by armed conflict or organized violence.[2] This means that at least one in four young people is affected by violence or armed conflict in some way. Estimates of direct conflict deaths in 2015 suggest that more than 90 per cent of all casualties involved young males. However, conflict, crime and other forms of violence impact young people's lives in more ways than mortality. While it often goes unrecorded, young people suffer from a wide range of short-, medium- and long-term effects ranging from repeat victimization to psychological trauma, identity-based discrimination, and social and economic exclusion. Currently, poor data makes it challenging to accurately estimate how many young people are living in situations in which they are exposed to those diverse forms of violence and violation.

9. In an increasingly interconnected world shaped by pervasive security concerns, stereotypes associating young people with violence are widespread and contagious. The stigmatization of youth manifests in prevailing stereotypes of young men as violent predators or potential spoilers of peace. It is true that young men are the primary perpetrators of many forms of violence, but these assumptions reinforce images of a universally violent masculinity, which has the erroneous effect of demonizing all young men. Young women are characterized as passive victims at best, or invisible at worst, which denies their agency. In many instances, these perspectives have been internalized by young people, who may not see themselves this way, but project these prevailing stereotypical views onto other young people.

10. Violent youth identities, however, are more often systematically shaped from above. It is primarily Governments and political leaders who seek to mobilize, and often to manipulate, the role and function of youth for political ends. Research findings indicate that such stereotypes are also widely sustained and reinforced by the media. From African-American youth in Chicago and New York and second-generation immigrant youth in Sweden, to young gang members in Central America and young peacebuilders in Burundi, young people complained of excessive media focus on youth violence at the expense of any attention to less newsworthy, ordinary young people or those involved in building peace.

The counter-productive impact of "policy panic"

Youth bulge

11. Early research on "youth bulges" claimed to find a correlation between a large youth cohort and an increased risk of criminal and/or political violence. These claims

[2] See Institute for Economics and Peace, *Data for Youth, Peace and Security: a Summary of Research Findings* (forthcoming).

were contradicted by evidence demonstrating that numerous countries with high youth populations continued to experience relative peace, including Benin, Botswana, Malawi, Nicaragua and Zambia. Subsequent research findings showed that age was not the sole criteria determining participation in violence, and that broader socioeconomic, cultural and political factors were critical in its onset. Evidence suggested that States with youth bulges were more likely to experience outbreaks of violence when economic and educational opportunities for youth were limited or non-existent.

12. The youth-bulge theory relies to too great an extent on quantitative data and neglects the views and perspectives of young people, which may help challenge this assumed correlation. The theory also ignores power differences in society and reinforces governmental responses that lean towards more repressive action targeting young people. While the youth-bulge theory overemphasizes youth violence, the resulting political and policy discourses downplay the role of structural inequalities and exclusion that contribute to youth poverty and powerlessness. Evidence shows that many Governments in societies with large youth populations pre-emptively adopt repressive approaches in anticipation of youthful dissent.[3]

Youth on the move

"We young people have three opportunities: to die assassinated, to migrate or to join a gang" (Central America)

13. Apprehension about youth bulges is not just about demographics, it is also directly associated with sudden and rapid population movements and growing youth urbanization, resulting in increasing rhetoric casting forcefully displaced young people as potential security threats. This tends to produce racial, ethnic and religious prejudice, sparking anti-immigrant populist movements that stimulate violence and social discord. Young migrants, refugees and internally displaced people are frequently treated as potential threats and a drain on the social security system, rather than resilient and economically innovative. In fact, their migration or forced displacement often represents a deliberate choice of flight over fight.

14. In a globalized world, notwithstanding differential access to technology, young people's horizons are being reshaped by their growing access to information and varied world views via social media and the Internet. They are increasingly aware of their rights and deprivation relative to other young people around the world, and have better visibility of human rights abuses and horizontal inequality among groups. This changes, both positively and, potentially, negatively, the spheres of influence young people are exposed to, reshaping their expectations and aspirations. Growing tension between these hopes and the constraints on free movement produces dissonance and frustration. Young people are mobile both physically through migration and virtually through globalization. Their capacity to transport themselves outside of the boundaries of their lives is potentially transformative, but is viewed by some as a threat, producing an instinct to shut down such sites rather than allowing them to flourish.

Violent extremism

15. Another key area in which stereotypical representations of youth have significantly misshaped policy priorities is the recruitment and participation of young men and women in violent extremist groups. Young people may account for the majority of those engaged in extremist violence, but only a minute proportion of the youth population is involved in violence. Most young people, even in the face of

[3] See Ragnhild Nordås and Christian Davenport, "Fight the youth: youth bulges and State repression", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 57, issue 4 (October 2013), pp. 926–940.

legitimate social, political and economic grievances, remain peaceful. Although some approaches to the prevention of violent extremism do acknowledge the importance of the empowerment of youth, policy orientations continue to taint the youth population as a whole, exacerbating their marginalization. Many of the young people who participated in the present study noted that the language of violent extremism was being imported from a particular geopolitical context and failed to adequately apply to their peace and security concerns.

16. According to the young people consulted, concerns about youth and violent extremism result in policy responses that denigrate and often repress the legitimate participation of youth in political processes, social movements, peaceful protest and expressions of dissent. This brings to mind the following statement by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism: "Several Governments already routinely label political opponents and journalists as terrorists. Identifying 'extremism' as the problem only provides more grounds to crush dissent."[4] Suspicion of violent extremism has facilitated the restriction and suspension of human rights and narrowed civic spaces for the voices of youth, who have frequently been labelled as "terrorists" or "extremists" when opposing Government policy. As a result, many young people have been arrested and jailed without due process and have suffered abuse at the hands of security and law enforcement institutions. In countries facing insurgencies led by violent extremist groups, community members have reported feeling more fearful of their Governments' violations of human rights and abuse by security forces than of extremist groups.[5] Such repressive action is identified as motivating young people's participation in violent extremist groups, particularly in North and sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

17. Such hard-fisted law enforcement and security approaches are being widely applied across different country contexts and types of violence. There is mounting evidence that these measures — including punitive policing, harsh sentencing and mass incarceration — are not only counter-productive, they are also simply not cost-effective. An excessive focus on strengthening public security not only diverts funds away from social services that are necessary to tackle the drivers of violence, but is also more costly when compared to alternative prevention-based harm- and risk-reduction models. Examples of successful measures in Latin America, where hard security responses have been detrimental, include integrated strategies that prioritize early childhood and family support, mentoring and work opportunities for at-risk young men, alternative sentencing for non-violent offenders and investment in disadvantaged communities.

18. The political urgency for Governments to respond to the threat of global terrorism has contributed to a discourse in which sweeping characterizations of youth as fundamentally at risk of violent extremism have produced unnuanced, counter-productive policy responses. The "policy panic" fed by these myths and assumptions, which are not based on sound evidence, is further alienating young people and diminishing their trust in their Governments and the multilateral system. Instead of offering proactive prevention approaches to violent conflict, it risks cementing young people in these roles, giving them a sense that there are no alternative pathways available to them. In addition, policy panic has driven policy and programmatic approaches that view education and employment as stand-alone solutions to the problem of youth participation in violence or recruitment into violent extremism, despite the lack of supporting evidence.

[4] See A/HRC/31/65, para. 21.

[5] See United Nations Development Programme, "Journey to Extremism in Africa" (New York, 2017).

The upside: youth resilience for peace

19. The resilience of youth has the potential to manifest in either positive or negative ways. Where young people are excluded, a small minority may forge alternative places of belonging, status and power that exacerbate the risk of violence, creating a potential vicious cycle. However, the vast majority of young people are not involved in, or in danger of participating in, violence. Young people's manifestations of positive resilience in the face or wake of conflict range from being protective, survivalist or adaptive (through migration or finding alternative sources of income) to being transformative (by driving political change, rebuilding damaged relationships and even addressing the underlying causes of conflict). It is therefore imperative to focus on this virtuous cycle and invest in the upside, that is, in the positive contributions of young men and women and the vibrant spaces most occupy in their everyday lives.

III. Youth for peace

Definitions of peace

"We have not had peace for over 26 years. I just want to experience it once in my lifetime." (Somalia, male)

20. Young people across the globe articulated the view that peace and security are more than just the absence of violence and, as such, are of universal concern. They stressed the importance of ending violence and addressing its symptoms (negative peace) as well as engaging the underlying causes of corruption, inequality and social injustice (positive peace). Peace and security, in their view, depended on human rights-based protections and redress, especially for young people working in societies affected by violence. Young people talked about their desire to safeguard the planet and identified the risk of climate change as a progenitor of conflict impacting future generations. They spoke about the scourge of terrorism and extremist violence as well as experiences of forced migration. Young people were clear that conflict might be unavoidable, but ensuring that there were social and political channels for navigating it was critical to the prevention of violence. They also acknowledged the divided nature of their own communities, including among their peers, and understood that peace must be built horizontally across these divides, as well as vertically, between young people and the State.

21. For most young people, conceptions of peace and security were also deeply personal, associated with well-being and happiness. Peace was described as physical, structural and psychological, touching upon issues of belonging, dignity, hope and the absence of fear. It was also seen as fundamentally gendered, particularly in relation to personal safety, with sexual and gender-based violence as a core concern. For some, however, the discussions of peace felt abstract and remote owing to the situations of extreme violence to which they were exposed and the sense of abandonment and disillusionment they felt with regard to their Governments and the international community.

Agency, ownership and leadership

22. In keeping with the principles of local agency and leadership in peace and development, it is important to draw specific attention to the unique contributions of youth-led civil society organizations. A survey undertaken as part of the present

study[6] offered a picture of the work being done by these peacebuilding organizations, mostly at the local level, in contexts of poor governance, instability or violence. The organizations surveyed varied greatly in size, depth and impact. Their most commonly self-identified goal was "empowering youth to develop their skills in understanding conflict resolution", followed by "reducing violence and promoting a culture of peace in communities". They aimed to assist in restoring or supporting social cohesion within divided communities and to change the generalized mistrust of youth in communities to a view of them as "positive and constructive agents". The strength of their organizations, respondents believed, was rooted in their deep understanding of local conditions and meaningful community relationships, which enabled them to work with populations that other actors could not easily access. A representative of an organization in Kenya stated: "We are able to penetrate areas that have been perceived as terror hotspots and feared by many, for instance... [an] Al-Shabaab militia stronghold in East Africa".

23. The survey showed that most youth-led organizations depended heavily on volunteers. As a whole, the work described by the organizations was primarily community- or family-based or individually oriented and had low visibility. Many of the organizations were modestly funded or underfunded. Funding constraints determined the types of activities these organizations could undertake, as well as the span and reach of their projects. Half of the 399 organizations that answered the survey operated with less than $5,000 per year, and only 11 per cent did so with more than $100,000.

24. The organizations themselves recognized that assessing the impact of their initiatives was often difficult. This is not for lack of will, or because their impact cannot be assessed, but is due rather to lack of capacity and funds and limited time to monitor and evaluate their work. These conditions inhibit these grassroots organizations from further developing their initiatives. Additional research on the peacebuilding impact of the work carried out by youth organizations needs to be conducted to move beyond self-reported successes towards more systematic and rigorous evaluation. The strengths that youth-led organizations reported were, however, integral to peace and security. Their capacity to mobilize their peers and other community members and to understand local dynamics and priorities that might be easily overlooked by others involved in peacebuilding is critical.

25. Youth-led organizations are an important source of youth leadership and agency for peace and security, but not the only one. Many organizations doing important work with or for young people are not led by young people. Youth leadership is found in diverse institutions and arenas of civic life, as well as in civil society organizations and remote communities. Importantly, youth leadership is also frequently found outside formal political institutions and youth organizations, in seemingly unorganized systems and informal movements that function along a horizontal axis instead of through top-down leadership. It is important to recognize these diverse sources of organic youth leadership in order to maximize youth ownership and agency — their autonomous capacities to act and drive change — with respect to the peace and security issues that affect their lives.

Typology of youth engagements

26. Young people and youth organizations are actively engaged in different phases of peace and conflict cycles. They contribute to the prevention of the outbreak of violent conflict through early intervention approaches, including, for example,

[6] See United Networks of Young Peacebuilders and Search for Common Ground, *Mapping a Sector: Bridging the Evidence Gap on Youth-Driven Peacebuilding* (2017). Available from www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy.

through intercommunal dialogue to prevent electoral violence in Kenya or by promoting peace education among young school-aged children in Myanmar. They build peace in situations of ongoing conflict, for example, through peer-to-peer dialogue in conflict-affected communities in Kyrgyzstan or through disengagement and reintegration of former extremist fighters in Somalia. They use their access to local communities to provide humanitarian support during escalating conflicts, whether through feeding those affected in Yemen or documenting human rights violations during the conflict in Colombia. In post-conflict settings, youth have contributed to consolidating peace through participation in formal and informal peace processes in the Philippines, and in truth and reconciliation processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In Japan, decades after the atomic bomb, young people are actively campaigning for nuclear disarmament. These examples illustrate how youth are modelling the engagement before, during and after conflict that is required to sustain peace.

27. Youth peace work engages in innovative ways with different typologies of violence, including in the prevention of and resilience to violent extremism, political conflict, organized criminal violence, intercommunal and community-level violence, sexual and gender-based violence, resource-based conflict and violence in prisons. This work covers a wide spectrum of activities, such as young women organizing to address female genital mutilation in the Gambia, young people providing alternatives to gang membership in Honduras, youth working to address the political conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and organizing around police abuse of power against transgender individuals in Turkey and school children mobilizing against gun violence in the United States of America.

28. Young people's work on peace and security draws on a wide range of methodologies for engaging diverse stakeholders: working with individuals, families and communities, peer-to-peer or cross-generationally, and with national and international actors. Many organizations are specialized and highly localized. Others operate as intermediaries, working at the community level but also connecting with local and national authorities, and sometimes with the international community. For organizations working at national, regional and global levels, awareness campaigns, youth forums and leadership programmes are common interventions for building capacity, exchanging knowledge and enhancing impact. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) is itself a testament to the power of young people's work, as youth organizations were the first to advocate for such a resolution.

29. Partnerships were consistently highlighted by young people and their organizations as a key priority and means for expanding their impact. Across the world, young people and youth organizations, movements and networks described how they had forged partnerships and working relationships with their Governments, often through local authorities and institutional engagement with community leaders, educational institutions, media and cultural organizations. There are important examples of youth working within key State institutions, including in formal and non-formal learning spaces, and community policing and criminal justice institutions in countries as diverse as Canada, South Africa and Yemen. Partnerships across generational divides with elders and older generations were also highlighted, as were partnerships with national and international civil society organizations.

30. Youth-led peace and security work is noticeably innovative and resourceful in using art, sport and media. From interpersonal engagements to spontaneous, autonomous and leaderless social movements mobilized online, the diversity of youth initiatives in this sphere is significant. Examples include a poetry festival organized by young people in Guatemala to deal with past violence against indigenous communities, the use of radio in Uganda to facilitate dialogue between refugee groups and host communities, a boxing academy to demobilize gang members in Brazil, an

online application to indicate unsafe urban zones for young women in India, or rap music and spoken words to critique the status quo.

31. Youth peacebuilding actors are extremely diverse. They are also, like any social group, often divided. Individual ambitions, sociopolitical divisions and competition for resources and visibility are all challenges that affect youth organizations, as they do many others. It is critical to recognize these divisions and realities in order to avoid romanticizing young people by incorrectly assuming that they all share the same yearning to engage for the common good. It is also important to guard against the co-optation or cultivation of youth elites, who may sometimes speak too readily for the most marginalized or less formally organized youth. In Côte d'Ivoire, the challenges faced by the leadership of some youth-led organizations were described as the "me first" phenomenon, in which some young leaders put individual ambitions before community interests and "road-blockers", hired to help identify participants for projects, selected their friends or peers.[7] In other contexts, such as Burundi and Honduras, young people described how political participation was tightly controlled and almost impossible outside of affiliation with established political parties.

32. Young people are powerful challengers of the status quo through peaceful protest, social critique, cultural expression and, in recent years, online mobilization. This is a longstanding and perhaps universal dimension of the change agency of youth, with numerous examples throughout history of young women and men at the forefront of political and social change, such as the civil rights movement in the United States, the initially peaceful student protests against apartheid in South Africa, the Indignados Movement in Spain, the anti-corruption protests in Guatemala, movements such as Le balai citoyen in Burkina Faso and Y'en a marre in Senegal, and the youth uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. Such movements have often faced State violence in reaction to their mobilization against corruption or entrenched political power. However, protests and dissent remain some of the most important tools for youth-based movements struggling for political change and justice. They offer attractive alternatives to violence, and may also stimulate positive change within societies. It is critical that the space for these social movements be protected, and this depends on the realization of the rights to freedom of association, assembly, movement and expression, which young people passionately advocated for throughout the research for the present study, all of which are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

IV. Addressing the "violence of exclusion"

"Youth shouldn't be on the table, but around the table." (participant in the West and Central Africa consultation)

33. Young people around the world described their experiences of exclusion as a form of structural and psychological violence that is indivisible from their political, social, cultural and economic disempowerment. This manifests in both mistrust by young people of State-society relations and in mistrust of young people by their communities and wider society. The present section addresses and counters this "violence of exclusion" by advocating for the meaningful inclusion of young people all over the world.

[7] See Interpeace and Indigo Côte d'Ivoire, *Youth Speak Out! Participatory Analysis of Their Engagement for Peace and Security in Côte d'Ivoire* (2017). Available from http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2017-Cote_dIvoire-Youth_Peace__Security-Eng-WEB-v7-1.pdf.

Inclusive politics

"We young people are only called up when it's time to wave flags or put up posters. When we want to share proposals they don't take us into account and when we voice criticism we are sidelined." (Central America)

34. Over the course of the preparation of the present study, young people consistently raised two important and related frustrations: their exclusion from meaningful civic and political participation and their mistrust of systems of patronage and corrupt governance that lack the will and capacity to address their exclusion. This has driven young people's demand for greater participation in electoral processes and policymaking through youth councils, assemblies and parliaments, as well as decision-making forums at the local, national, regional and global levels. However, for many young people, their mistrust has triggered scepticism and a loss of confidence in democratic governance itself. In response, many young people have withdrawn from formal politics, electoral systems and other institutions, instead creating alternative avenues for participation. Although spaces for political participation are often severely narrowed in contexts of ongoing or escalating violent conflict, young people can and do play important political roles. These roles may more often be adaptive rather than transformative. Nonetheless, they contribute to the political positioning and standing of youth and their organizations.

35. Meaningful engagement with youth lays the groundwork for the stability and enhanced legitimacy of Governments. However, such engagement needs to be reflected in institutional governance mechanisms that are accountable to youth and include them as key stakeholders, especially with respect to justice, security, educational and other State institutions that have a particular impact on the lives of young people. In order for political participation to be meaningful, young women and men need to be broadly represented and consulted in all arenas, without being subjected to co-optation, manipulation or control by political parties. The goals of peace and security demand that these civic and political spaces for youth promote full inclusivity and are respected, protected and supported as a priority.

36. The roles that young people play and the way in which they participate in informal peace processes are diverse; however, their participation in formal peace processes remains limited. Perversely, violent, predominantly male youth have a remote prospect of participating as leaders of warring factions, while those who have remained peaceful or who have been actively working towards peace are excluded almost entirely. The recognition and participation of young people as peacemakers is critical to ensuring their investment in the future of peace processes and guaranteeing the durability of peace through generations. The legitimacy, credibility and accountability of participating youth is extremely dependent on the use of selection processes that are fair and involve diverse groups of young people who are well connected to other young people on the ground and operating within civil society. Similar concerns apply to the use of youth quotas, which may have the benefit of fast-tracking progress, but demand the participation of youth who maintain credible links to broader informal youth peacebuilding efforts.

37. Social media and communications technologies are increasingly being pioneered by young people as an alternative means to exercise their political agency, demand accountability, amplify their voices, foster connectivity and create new networks. Online platforms are particularly important for those who may be vulnerable, unable to access deliberative political processes or constrained by restrictive institutional politics, even though such spaces may also be used for criminal activity or to propagate hate speech. Governments and political processes can benefit from the innovation and leadership youth demonstrate by embracing these spaces and the transnational connectivity they offer. An important limitation

identified by young people relates to the digital divide between those with and those without access to technology, which has prompted the creative use of traditional communications tools.

Beyond just jobs: advancing the economic inclusion of youth

38. Irrespective of country context and levels of violence, concerns over economic well-being and livelihoods were key issues in relation to peace and security for youth consulted in the preparation of the present study. For many, economic inclusion was defined as fair access to meaningful and reliable employment, largely driven by the fact that the vast majority of young people are employed in the informal economy. Concerns about employment are hardly surprising given the global youth unemployment rate of 13 per cent, which is approximately three times the adult unemployment rate.[8] However, these rates are often unable to account for informal and illicit subeconomies, rendering much of the economic activity of young people statistically invisible.

39. In large part, peace and security programming and policies continue to be driven by a widely presumed causal relationship between youth unemployment and violence. In fact, there is little reliable evidence for a correlation, let alone causation, between youth unemployment and violent conflict. In various countries, such as Afghanistan and Somalia, there is strong evidence that economic well-being does not lower support for armed groups. Instead, research suggests that violent conflict is more likely explained by experiences of horizontal inequality and identity-based factors, including stunted economic and social mobility, political exclusion, disillusionment with corrupt institutions, rigid intergenerational social structures that contribute to discrimination against youth, perceptions of injustice, unmet social needs and little recognition of young people's search for meaning and belonging. Although economic opportunities are a necessary factor in young people's overall well-being, their contributions to sustaining peace must be understood within a broader ecological framework so as not to reinforce stereotypes about the dangers of unemployed youth.

40. Globally, three out of four young people are employed in the informal economy.[8] While many young people are employed in licit informal economies, a large number are employed in illicit and war-based subeconomies, which have an enduring influence on youth that can persist long after the violence ends. This is especially the case when armed or criminal groups are able to provide better social services, employment and opportunities, supplanting formal governance structures and fuelling resentment as a result of unmet promises. The importance of this phenomenon must not be underestimated, particularly when interventions aimed at promoting young people's economic inclusion focus on giving them a marginal or temporary stake in the formal economy, ignoring the detrimental impact and limitations of broader social issues. Young people working in informal economies often face increased exposure to abusive and arbitrary treatment by law enforcement officials, who lump together legitimate informal work and illicit activities, framing both as threats to State security. This is particularly true for young women and sexual and gender minorities in developing countries, who are employed primarily through informal economies and are subjected to harassment and violence with little recourse to justice.

41. Employment interventions to date have been heavily informed by the supply and demand of local labour markets, with little focus on young people's needs, aspirations and yearning for dignity. They often offer non-skilled and casual employment, ignoring young people's desires for meaningful jobs with a living wage and access to social protections. At other times, these programmes take the form of necessity

[8] See International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a Better Working Future* (Geneva, 2017).

entrepreneurship, which requires young people to become self-employed for lack of alternative options. Here, young people's positive attributes, such as creativity and innovation, can be used against them to suggest they carry the risks associated with a volatile labour market. The vast majority of employment interventions are limited by the underlying assumption that changes in individual behaviour will produce positive outcomes for development and peace at the community level.

42. Horizontal inequality and elite capture have left young people feeling deeply distrustful of the economic systems from which they continue to be excluded. Growing and deeply intertwined economic, social and political inequalities heavily influence young people's mobility within society and their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Interventions targeted at improving young people's economic stake in society must take a transformative approach, rather than focusing solely on opening up access to systems from which they have been historically excluded. For many young people, participation in local and national development policy processes and programme implementation, serves the dual purpose of expanding their economic stake, beyond just jobs, and cultivating spaces for their political and civic engagement.

Disengagement from violent groups and reintegration

43. The rebuilding of trust is vital both to young people's disengagement from violence and to their reintegration into non-violent society. Disengagement and reintegration programmes can themselves generate conflict within communities when they are seen as privileging young combatants over victimized communities and prioritizing investment in young men, who are perceived to be at higher risk, at the expense of young women. Employment and vocational training opportunities may help in the short term, but cannot substitute for longer-term psychosocial and economic support. Recent policies and programming aim to address this issue by implementing holistic interventions that work with local communities to address the stigma and discrimination young combatants experience, especially young women who are viewed as having transgressed strict gender norms and roles. In addition, with the limited trust disengaging combatants have in State-run programmes, mentors, who are themselves young former combatants, and youth organizations are uniquely positioned to play an active role. Through their presence on the ground and their better understanding of young disengaging combatants' needs and local realities, they may serve as a bridge between disengaging youth and the community.

Education

"We need to engage young people at a younger age, the curricula for children should also include peacebuilding, so they grow up with this mindset." (Fiji, male)

44. Education featured universally as a core peace and security concern for young people, demonstrating the critical importance it has for young women and men all over the world. Educational institutions are of strategic importance and serve as critical sites for interlocution between young people, as beneficiaries, and the State or non-State actors, as providers. Qualitative studies illustrate that educational institutions may be places of social cohesion, reconciliation and belonging or flashpoints that exacerbate division and exclusion. Recent quantitative studies show a consistent statistical relationship, over a period of five decades, between higher levels of inequality in educational attainment among ethnic and religious groups and the likelihood that a country will experience violent conflict.[9] In many respects,

[9] Micke T. A. Lopes Cardozo and Giovanni Scotto, "Youth, peacebuilding and the role of education", thematic paper of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies/Advisory Group of Experts for the Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security, December 2017.

educational systems reproduce issues of unequal access and quality along divisions of class, gender, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, politics and privilege.

45. Educational institutions are often the first casualties of violent conflict. In the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, it is estimated that at least 1.75 million school-aged children and over 40 per cent of Syrian refugee children have lost access to school owing to the ongoing conflict. There are also deliberate attacks on schools, as extremist groups seek to assert control over them, including assaults on individual students and teachers, the destruction of school buildings or the strategic use of school premises. Young women's access to education is heavily restricted in many parts of the world, owing to deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and the concomitant risk of violence. As a long-standing strategy across different typologies of violence — from organized crime to political or extremist groups — educational institutions have been used as a point of access to recruit young people. In the aftermath of such violence, however, education and educational institutions can contribute to psychosocial recovery, the restoration of normalcy, hope and the acquisition of values and skills for building and maintaining a peaceful future.

46. While education is extremely important to young people and their success, it is often touted as the solution to the youth "menace".[10] This has resulted in education, and young people's interest in it, being viewed as a rather narrow means to an end. However, the assumption of a linear relationship between violence and educational deficits has been challenged by cases in which highly educated and well-off young people join armed groups. Going forward, emerging research and programme interventions need to focus on the role of education and its potential to prevent young people from engaging in violence, as well as on how young people forge alternative non-violent pathways.

47. Young people expressed ambitious hopes for the role of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, as well as non-formal mechanisms, as potentially transformative in building peace. They also pointed to the vital need for value-based education for peace and teaching of critical thinking skills and non-violent methods to address conflicts, with a particular focus on the celebration of diversity. Young people were mindful of the gap between their aspirations and the limited capacities and political will of their Governments and educational institutions to deliver on them. They pointed out that many civil society organizations, including youth-led organizations, have extensive experience in developing educational strategies and modules for peace, through both formal and non-formal means, signalling the importance of building strategic partnerships.

Gender

48. The perceived relationship between young men and violence has resulted in a tendency for youth programming in peace and security to prioritize young men. Young people around the world repeatedly discussed gender in relation to youth and peace and security. In their work on peace and security, young people engage in a variety of ways on gender, including by advocating for gender equality, organizing leadership and communications training sessions for young women, promoting sexual and reproductive rights, raising awareness of the multiple forms of sexual and gender-based violence and providing socio-emotional learning for young men and boys.

49. Sexual and gender-based violence disproportionately affect women of all ages across every phase of the peace and conflict continuum, although this is often exacerbated during violent conflict. Young women are at risk of violence in both the

[10] Elisabeth King, "What Kenyan youth want and why it matters for peace", *African Studies Review* (forthcoming).

public and the private sphere. Sexual and gender minorities also face an increased risk of violence and discrimination during conflict and into peacetime. For young people engaged in the present study, the protection and full enjoyment of rights for young people from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex community was viewed as an essential contribution to inclusive and sustainable peace.

50. Over the past few decades, increasing attention has been paid to the role of women in peace and security as a result of a strong women's movement, which led to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions. These resolutions have been instrumental in demonstrating how women can and do actively participate in building peace in their communities and across the globe. However, the peacebuilding work undertaken, which is often initiated and led by young women, demands greater attention and visibility. Examples of this work include using digital platforms in Libya to share women's voices in peace and conflict, building leadership and advocacy skills in the Caucasus and the Balkans, and contributing to the peace process in Mali. However, for many young women, their roles in society continue to be restricted by an exclusive focus on their protection, and while it is important to acknowledge and address their disproportionate experiences of sexual and gender-based violence, they should not be seen solely as victims. Supporting their peacebuilding work and listening attentively to them is an important step towards recognizing their role as active contributors to peace and security.

51. To date, research on gender and peacebuilding has focused principally on the gendered impacts of violent conflict, but relatively little attention has been afforded to the gendered drivers of violent conflict. Understanding how gender identities feed into violent conflict is key, as is focusing more deeply on the interplay between different intersecting identities (age, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, ability, religion, urban/rural setting) and gender. The implementation of resolution 2250 (2015) presents an invaluable opportunity to open a discussion and promote programmatic engagement on masculine identities, in an effort to address their negative associations with violence and overturn harmful stereotypes that are deeply embedded in traditional gender norms and roles. Youthhood is a vital phase in which young people's identities and views of themselves are being shaped and cemented, and on which families, elders, religious leaders and peers all exert great influence. Investing in youth peacebuilding work focused on promoting positive, gender-equitable and non-violent masculine roles and identities is an essential step towards fostering peaceful and inclusive societies. The identification of the persistent inequalities that increase young women's and sexual and gender minorities' exposure to violence and limit their ability to contribute to decision-making and their access to power and resources, is crucial to promoting gender equality.

Dealing with injustice and human rights

"We can't talk about peace and security with groups that do not have basic rights. We first need to secure people's basic rights." (participant in the Arab States consultation)

52. A prevailing concern expressed by young men and women throughout all the research undertaken for the progress study has been the disproportionate victimization and traumatization of young people as a result of conflict, armed violence, State violence, terrorism, gangs and organized crime, gender-based violence and violence against young migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons. Beyond physical violence, young people also expressed concerns about violations of their fundamental rights. It is important to note that young men and women are often themselves active and creative protagonists in the protection realm, from monitoring

and documenting human rights violations to supporting the design and implementation of protection measures, building networks and support structures and fighting for recognition of their civic, political and socioeconomic rights.

53. Grievances and frustration associated with experiences of injustice are central issues in the trajectory of young people's lives in a globalized world. Exposure to violence, especially at a young age, and particularly at the hands of the very institutions that are supposed to protect young people, is a key factor in escalating cycles of violence across generations. In countries from the global North and the global South alike, young people testified to the harassment and violence they regularly experienced at the hands of the police. In order to ensure protection and accountability, it is critical that the issues of civic trust and the rule of law, abuse of power by security institutions, and the realization of full socioeconomic, cultural and political rights for young people be addressed. This can make a vital contribution to guarantees of non-recurrence. Justice and human rights are therefore essential vehicles for prevention and lay the foundation for sustainable peace. From the perspective of transitioning societies, young people, as the purveyors of historical memory, are critical stakeholders and have an invaluable role to play in the design and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms.

54. The specific targeting of young people and their exposure to protracted violence have a detrimental impact on their psychosocial health and well-being. Uncertainty and instability discourage young people from investing in their future and, unless addressed, can lead to self-destructive coping mechanisms. We must better support young people's psychosocial well-being through efficacious, culturally relevant and context-specific community interventions.

55. Social services are a crucial component of the State-society relationship. They are, therefore, a logical arena in which States and institutions can enhance their legitimacy and work to regain young people's trust, including in addressing the consequences of young people's exposure to violence. The equitable provision and delivery of social services, including sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial and other services that are particularly critical for young people, are necessary to promote social cohesion and ensure that all young people have an equal start in life. Inequitable delivery of these services provokes mistrust in democratic institutions and can feed grievances that underpin conflict.

V. From a demographic dividend to a peace dividend

"What motivates me is [to] show them that we can also do very important things for our communities, that we have a voice and are willing to build a better future." (Colombia, male)

56. Young people, even when they act locally, have critical contributions to make at the national, regional and global levels. For this to happen, they need to have opportunities to participate in peer-to-peer learning and directly in national, regional and international systems. Young people's work on peace and security is the "connective tissue" that bridges the silos of development, human rights, humanitarian affairs and peace and security, from the local to the global level. The work of young people on peace and security — across different phases of conflict, types of violence and regions of the world — is vital, not just because of the size of their demographic group: if the right investments in youth are in place, and their peacebuilding work is recognized and nurtured, societies may reap a peace dividend.

57. Realizing this peace dividend requires a commitment to ensuring that youth initiatives, organizations and individuals can operate in an environment that values

and respects them, rather than one which controls or represses them. This can be achieved by providing the political, financial, legal and social means for optimizing and multiplying young people's initiatives so that they may fully reach their potential to contribute to peace and security in their societies. Young women and men in general, and those investing in peace and the prevention of violence specifically, should be seen as indispensable allies in the quest for peace and security.

58. Building and sustaining peace through the transformative potential of young people demands a seismic shift and bold reorientation from Governments and the multilateral system, for which resolution 2250 (2015) planted the seeds:

(a) First and foremost, this requires making the shift from reactive and remedial security responses, often informed by policy panic, to a comprehensive violence prevention approach with young people at its centre. Systematically addressing the violence of exclusion is the best means to prevent violence, including violent extremism, thus building and sustaining peace across the full peace and conflict continuum;

(b) The prevention approach demands that Governments and international organizations prioritize support for the positive resilience of the majority of young people, rather than exclusively reacting to the risk represented by just a few;

(c) Governments and multilateral organizations must commit to partnerships based on trust with diverse civil society partners working on peace and security, and, specifically, organizations led by and focused on youth. These partnerships will need to demonstrate sincerity and go beyond tokenistic and cursory endeavours;

(d) These changes demand the transformation of deeply entrenched attitudes and practices. It is therefore imperative to build on the foundation offered by resolution 2250 (2015) in developing new societal norms and behaviours regarding youth and peace and security. This can be advanced through a combination of measures, including dialogue and accountability mechanisms that demand compliance and commitment by Governments; incentives and benefits for Governments and multilateral organizations to build youth-inclusive systems; training and capacity-building on youth and peace and security in national and international organizations, and ensuring that resolution 2250 (2015) is fully socialized and integrated at the national level.

Recommendations

59. For societies and countries to fully harness and support the innovation of young people's contributions to peace and to begin to work towards the seismic challenges set out above, three mutually reinforcing strategies are needed. First, it is critical to invest in young people's capacities, agency and leadership through substantial funding support, network-building and capacity-strengthening, recognizing the full diversity of youth and the ways young people organize. Second, the systems that reinforce exclusion must be transformed in order to address the structural barriers limiting youth participation in peace and security. Third, partnerships and collaborative action, where young people are viewed as equal and essential partners for peace, must be prioritized.

Investing in the capacities, agency and leadership of young people

60. To ensure a substantial increase in financial resources to support youth organizations, initiatives and movements focused on peace and security, Member States, donors, international financial institutions and other international organizations should:

(a) Allocate $1.8 billion, representing an investment of $1 per young person, by 2025 for the tenth anniversary of resolution 2250 (2015);

(b) Provide flexible funding designed with the specific needs of youth organizations in mind. The funding should provide opportunities for small-scale projects and initiatives, and innovative, risk-taking programmatic approaches;

(c) Create dedicated youth and peace and security windows under existing funds;

(d) Prioritize, as part of any funding support to youth organizations, the building of organizational capacities to increase their financial sustainability and the impact of their work.

61. In order to ensure that the capacities of youth organizations are enhanced, the leadership of youth is acknowledged and youth networking is nurtured, Member States and international and civil society organizations should:

(a) Support the establishment or strengthening of national, regional and global youth peace networks, online and offline, for young people and their organizations to connect, organize for action and exchange experiences, knowledge and resources;

(b) Make every effort to ensure that programmes related to youth and peace and security are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated with and by young people themselves;

(c) Acknowledge and highlight the positive work of young women and men working on peace and security through the allocation of awards, grants and honours;

(d) Prioritize capacity-building within their own organizations by engaging young leaders and members of youth organizations in training and sensitization sessions on youth and peace and security.

From exclusion to meaningful inclusion

62. In order to ensure the meaningful and inclusive political participation of youth and increased civic trust, Member States and international and regional organizations should:

(a) Adopt and support the use of quotas for the direct and gender-equitable participation of young people in all phases of formal peace and political transition processes, from pre-negotiation to implementation, including in national dialogues, constitution-making, transitional justice and other political processes related to peace and security. These processes should include mechanisms for sustained interaction with a wide diversity of young people, paying particular attention to the inclusion of young women and to ensuring that funding and security measures are in place for the participation of young people;

(b) Institutionalize measures to close the gap between the youth population and the representation of youth in local and national governance institutions and processes by adopting youth quotas, establishing youth advisory boards and roles, and facilitating young people's access to elected positions by aligning the age of eligibility to run for office with the voting age;

(c) Prioritize opportunities for young refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants and young people from host communities to share their peace and security challenges through intergenerational dialogue and consultative forums and to take part in decision-making processes to ensure that their needs are addressed;

(d) Expand digital networks to remote communities to support the meaningful and inclusive participation of young people.

63. In order to maximize the protection of young people from violence and guarantee the realization of their rights, Member States, international organizations and human rights actors should:

(a) Respect, protect and uphold young people's universal and fundamental rights of freedom of organization, peaceful assembly, association, opinion and expression and participation in public affairs, to foster an enabling and safe environment for young people working on peace and security and ensure that they do not face reprisals for their work. The United Nations and human rights actors should give this utmost priority and support Member States in upholding those inalienable rights;

(b) Preserve the integrity of rule of law institutions by protecting young people's human rights, including safeguarding them from arbitrary arrest and incarceration, ending impunity and ensuring equal access to justice and accountability. Young women and men should be prioritized as key interlocutors and stakeholders, including in the design and implementation of security sector, penal and criminal justice reform processes;

(c) Broaden the engagement of human rights institutions and processes with young people by mainstreaming the rights and participation of young people into the work of the human rights treaty bodies, special procedures and other human rights mechanisms;

(d) Prioritize the mental health and well-being of young people through increased funding and the provision of age- and gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory and comprehensive health services, including psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health services.

64. In order to support young people's meaningful broader economic inclusion and advance the development of conflict-sensitive, inclusive and youth-centred employment programmes, Member States, international financial institutions, other international organizations and civil society organizations, should:

(a) Invest in the creation of safe community spaces for civic dialogue, where young people collectively identify peacebuilding and development priorities for action within their communities and partake in decision-making about the allocation of related funds;

(b) Continue to support inclusive labour policies and practices that ensure equal access for all young people to the labour market and the enjoyment of fundamental principles and rights at work, remove structural barriers for marginalized youth, involve young people in decision-making regarding labour policies, bolster social protections in both the formal and informal economy, advance gender equality and adopt a lifecycle approach;

(c) Engage young people, alongside community members, in an assessment of their economic needs prior to the design of any intervention, as well as in the design itself, and in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of employment programmes;

(d) Reach out proactively to the most marginalized young people in order to ensure that they are the primary target of employment programmes and to avoid limiting access to elite youth and exacerbating inequality.

65. In order to ensure that the disengagement of former combatants is effective and that social reintegration is sustainable, Member States, international organizations and civil society organizations should:

(a) Partner with young people to design and implement disengagement and reintegration processes, for example, by establishing official cooperation agreements between youth organizations and security institutions, that clearly define roles and responsibilities;

(b) Support pathways for young people to identify relevant strategic priorities, policies and programmatic approaches.

66. In order to ensure that education is optimized as a tool for peace and that educational institutions are protected from violence, Member States, educational institutions, the private sector and international and civil society organizations should:

(a) Make specific investments in education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels that is inclusive and based on positive values, as well as in non-formal and informal educational initiatives. This should include a focus on the development of context-specific critical thinking skills, the values of diversity and non-violence, socioemotional learning and conflict resolution, as well as digital literacy training. It should be supported through multi-stakeholder "peace education partnerships";

(b) Prioritize the protection of primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions as spaces free from all forms of violence, and ensure that they are accessible to all young people, including young women and other marginalized youth.

67. In order to ensure that the unique experiences of young women and sexual and gender minorities in peace and security are addressed, and to support gender-equitable identities among young people, Member States and international and civil society organizations should:

(a) Systematically apply a gender and age lens to all conflict assessments and peacebuilding programming;

(b) Recognize and address harmful patriarchal attitudes that have an impact on the rights, integrity and agency of young women and sexual and gender minorities, while seeking always to create inclusive terms of engagement;

(c) Invest in youth peacebuilding work focused on promoting positive and equitable masculine identities that challenge restrictive social norms, including by working with traditional and religious leaders.

National, regional and global partnerships for youth and peace and security

68. In order to support the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015), Member States, the United Nations system and non-governmental stakeholders should:

(a) Prioritize the creation of youth and peace and security coalitions to ensure a collective impact on youth and peace and security at the local, national, regional and global levels. Such coalitions should be multisectoral and cross-cutting partnerships between young people, youth organizations and multilateral, government and civil society actors, including the private sector, religious communities, private foundations and educational institutions;

(b) Consult and actively include young people in defining concrete objectives and global and country-specific indicators to monitor progress and measure impact in the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015).

69. In order to support further research and data collection on youth and peace and security, Member States and international and civil society organizations should:

(a) Support qualitative and quantitative research and data collection on youth and peace and security (including, where feasible, youth perception data) at the

national, regional and global levels by allocating sufficient technical, financial and human resources. The information should be integrated into existing statistical efforts, stored in a central online repository and made publicly available to facilitate knowledge-sharing and good practice;

(b) Systematically disaggregate relevant data and national statistics by age, gender, socioeconomic background and geography.

70. In order to support the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015) at the national level, Governments should:

(a) Establish safe spaces for and maintain regular and ongoing consultations with diverse young people to identify their peace and security needs and priorities;

(b) Undertake a review of the impact of their peace and security policies and practices on young people and make it mandatory for the security sector to consult young people;

(c) Ensure synergies with national plans on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and define regular reporting and accountability mechanisms to monitor progress on implementation.

71. Regional bodies and mechanisms should support the development of policy frameworks that address youth and peace and security issues, led by regional organizations, networks and alliances of young peacebuilders working in partnership with other stakeholders to facilitate knowledge-sharing and information flow between countries.

72. At the global level, the United Nations system must create new mechanisms for dialogue and accountability by:

(a) Putting in place a tripartite monitoring structure to provide a common platform for Member States, the United Nations and young people to report on the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015);

(b) Creating an informal expert group on youth and peace and security composed of a diverse group of young people, selected transparently with youth organizations, to track a clearly defined set of issues, in order to mainstream resolution 2250 (2015) in the work of the Security Council;

(c) Making a priority of hearing directly from young people living in countries on the Security Council's agenda, through standard briefings or Arria Formula meetings;

(d) Including specific references to resolution 2250 (2015) in the mandates and reports of peacekeeping and political missions;

(e) Appointing an elected Security Council member to co-lead, alongside a permanent Security Council member, the monitoring of progress on the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015) to guarantee that key youth issues are raised in closed consultations with Council members;

(f) Requesting the Secretary-General to report annually to the Security Council on United Nations-wide efforts to implement resolution 2250 (2015), within the framework of an annual open debate, during which young peacebuilders will brief the Security Council.

73. The United Nations system should reform its internal mechanisms to broaden the participation of young people, by taking the following measures:

(a) Making youth advisory boards and youth advisors a standard practice for each United Nations country presence;

(b) Placing a youth advisor in the lead offices of the United Nations in all countries and in the executive offices of the Secretary-General and all United Nations entities to ensure that youth is a core focus in all the work undertaken by the United Nations for peace and security;

(c) Ensuring that dedicated capacities and expertise are in place to engage young people and youth organizations in sustaining peace at the national, regional and global levels;

(d) Developing a system-wide road map on youth and peace and security to facilitate joint action, coordination and coherence in resourcing across all entities working in this area.

Conclusion

74. The recommendations set out in the paragraphs above are the starting point of large-scale transformation and offer a framework for action within which young people, Governments, multilateral organizations, civil society and other actors can work together to support young people's innovation and build sustainable peace.

75. This study is testimony to the voices of the thousands of young people who have taken the time to speak to us and who have trusted us to listen. The full richness of their insights and experiences will be reflected in greater depth in the long version of this study. To those young people, and all the partners who helped facilitate our access to them, we owe an enormous debt of gratitude.

United Nations A/72/762

General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 February 2018

Original: English

Seventy-second session
Agenda item 72
Promotion and protection of human rights

Letter dated 12 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you information on the measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan to further promote human rights and strengthen the rule of law in the country with the aim of advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72.

(*Signed*) Bakhtiyor **Ibragimov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-02948 (E) 010318 060318

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 12 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Measures taken by the Government of Uzbekistan to further promote human rights and strengthen the rule of law in the country in the context of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

Today Uzbekistan has firmly established itself as an independent and sovereign State that has assumed its rightful place in the international community. Guarantees pertaining to national independence, human rights and freedoms and the development path chosen by the people of Uzbekistan have been enshrined in the national Constitution.

As noted by President Shavkat Mirziyoyez of the Republic of Uzbekistan: "The Constitution is a clear embodiment of the people's political and legal thinking. It serves as the guarantor of national independence, freedom, peace and prosperity, and provides a firm foundation for building a democratic State governed by the rule of law with a strong civil society and market economy".

In particular, the Constitution is the basis on which the Republic's legislative system, State bodies and civil society institutions have been established. Far-reaching reforms are currently under way in all areas. Steady growth can be seen in the State's socioeconomic and political potential, and Uzbek citizens have a broader world view.

The Government's main message is that people should feel the results of the reforms today, not tomorrow. Uzbekistan has adopted a strategy of action in five priority development areas for the period 2017–2021, many of the provisions of which are in keeping with the Sustainable Development Goals. Over 20 laws and 700 regulations were adopted last year alone in the context of implementing the strategy. Significant work has been carried out to implement the "people-first" message proclaimed.

Fundamental changes have been made to the role and significance of elected representative bodies — the parliament and kengashes of people's deputies — in public and political life. The powers of the legislature and political parties have been expanded, and parliamentary and public oversight institutions have been strengthened.

Consistent efforts have also been made to democratize the executive branch. The scope of the Government's functions and powers has expanded, its accountability has increased, and reporting to parliament has been strengthened. This gives practical expression to a fundamental principle enshrined in the Constitution, namely that people are the sole source of State authority.

In the context of strengthening the rule of law in Uzbekistan, a particular focus has been placed on fundamental judicial reform. To ensure consistency in jurisprudence, the Supreme Court and the Supreme Economic Court of the Republic have been merged. A Supreme Judicial Council has been established in order to prevent unlawful interference in the process of judicial selections and appointments, and to create an open, transparent and alternative system. Indefinite judicial appointments have been introduced, which has strengthened guarantees of the independence of judges with respect to the protection of civil rights.

The quality of investigations and the accountability of investigators have also been enhanced. The practice of incorporating public opinion has been established to ensure that every sentence is lawful and just. Offenders, especially young people, can be sponsored to serve non-custodial sentences by Mahalla citizens' assemblies, district and municipal councils of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan and women's committees, which gives them an opportunity to get back on track.

A presidential decree was adopted on additional measures to strengthen safeguards of civil rights and freedoms during investigative work, to maintain the rule of law and impartiality when evidence is collected and assessed. The decree prohibits torture, psychological or physical pressure and forms of violence. Pretrial detention centres and temporary detention facilities will be equipped with video monitoring equipment.

In criminal cases, the use of any data obtained illegally is strictly forbidden. The falsification of evidence will be specifically criminalized. In turn, in a criminal case lawyers are now entitled to collect and submit evidence that must be reviewed and assessed by the investigative and judicial authorities.

Citizens misled into crime, or who have shown genuine remorse, are given an opportunity to reintegrate into society and their families. Accordingly, for the first time in the history of Uzbekistan, the President of the country signed a decree in 2017 pardoning 2,700 persons convicted by the courts.

The work of the law enforcement agencies has also fundamentally changed. An entirely new system has been established to prevent violations of the law and combat crime. Rather than combating the consequences of crime, priority is now given to the timely prevention of illegal acts.

The consistent efforts of the Government of Uzbekistan to ensure the enjoyment of human rights have been commended by Zaid Read Al Hussein, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and by Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on freedom of religion or belief, both of whom visited the Republic for the first time last year.

In order to demonstrate its firm commitment to respecting and promoting human rights, and also to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Uzbekistan intends to host the Asian International Forum on Human Rights in November 2018, in Samarkand.

As a State, Uzbekistan is particularly focused on promoting and protecting the rights of young people. To that end, a decree has been adopted on measures to enhance the effectiveness of State youth policy and support the work of the Youth Union of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, in his address to the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, during the general debate, President Mirziyoyez of Uzbekistan proposed the development of a United Nations convention on the rights of youth — a unified international legal instrument geared towards establishing and implementing youth policy in the context of globalization and the rapid development of information and communications technology.

The Republic is strengthening guarantees relating to freedom of economic activity, free enterprise and freedom to work, with priority accorded to consumer rights, equality opportunities and legal protection for all forms of ownership. This principle was demonstrated in practice last September by the introduction of the sum, a national currency that can be freely exchanged. Uzbekistan now has a Ministry for Innovative Development. Another newly created office is that of the Ombudsman under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of business entities.

Both State and society are particularly focused on respecting the principle of social justice, which includes creating the conditions for those in need of assistance and support, first and foremost persons with physical disabilities, to lead productive lives. In that context, a commission has been set up to make proposals to fundamentally improve the system of State support for persons with disabilities, and an in-depth study has been conducted. The decree adopted on measures to fundamentally improve the system of State support for persons with disabilities provides this category of persons with new benefits and opportunities. The adoption of specific legislation on the rights of persons with disabilities is also envisaged.

In general, the reforms under way in Uzbekistan are primarily aimed at ensuring the enjoyment of human rights and giving real power to the people in deeds, not just words. The Government is also focused on ensuring that:

- Government bodies strictly observe the constitutional principle of the pre-eminence of human rights and freedoms
- Government bodies are transparent and accountable to the people's representatives — the parliament and kengashes of people's deputies
- Health care is prioritized by improving skilled medical care, modernizing disease prevention, enhancing the efficiency of nursing and screening services, and providing accessible and high-quality medicines to the public
- Social justice is achieved with equality before the law for all citizens, irrespective of their political views, gender, ethnicity, language or religious beliefs
- Constitutional rights to freedom of thought, speech and opinion are upheld in order to build a developed democratic State and a strong civil society
- As a consistently realized principle, citizens, the State and society have shared responsibilities and mutual rights and obligations for effective cooperation between the State and individuals, or the State and society, in addressing the important tasks before the country
- Freedom of enterprise and the inviolability of private property are protected
- The rights and interest of Uzbek citizens everywhere are comprehensively protected.

In summary, it can be said that Uzbekistan has set itself the ambitious goal of becoming a developed democratic State. In that context, the wide-ranging reforms taking place in the Republic today are a clear indication that the country is moving in the right direction. The successful implementation of these reforms will be instrumental in achieving that goal.